



March 11, 2022

RE: HB 292 – An Act Relating to Home and Community-Based Services

Representative Snyder,

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services. Our council membership is composed of self-advocates and family members of individuals with intellectual and development disabilities (60%), as well as agency and partner representatives (40%). One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on proposed recommendations that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families.

Individuals who utilize waiver services depend on these supports to avoid institutional care and to help them retain as much independence as possible, at the lowest cost to the State. HCBS services cost on average 59% less than services received through Intermediate Care Facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities¹ and can cost 45% to 90% less than nursing home care². The importance and essentialness of home and community-based services (HCBS) was especially apparent during the COVID19 pandemic, when they helped save the lives of vulnerable Alaskans who would otherwise live in larger congregate settings.

However, the systems of support for Alaskans with disabilities are stretched precariously thin. These services can only be utilized if there is a workforce available to provide them. Reducing barriers for individuals to become qualified Personal Care Assistants will help preserve these services and give more Alaskans a chance to remain in their own home and community rather than being placed in institutions or other isolated settings.

The Council would like to extend support for HB292 and urge the legislature to pass this important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Myranda Walso".

Myranda Walso
Executive Director, GCDSE

¹ Source: State of Alaska Automated Budget System, Final Auth20 report, Harmony and COGNOS.

² Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, Presentation to the Alaska Legislature, March 8, 2019.